

Cambridge, Mass. April 15, 1855.

Dr. Gray.

Dear Sir: I am disappointed in not having received among the Cucurbitaceous seeds, ordered from Paris, some of the kinds that are important in the study, comparison, and identification of species. If you are in correspondence with any competent botanist in Paris, perhaps you may be able to obtain them, - if also you consider it at all desirable to have the means for raising these kinds yourself, as objects of study. The kinds to which I refer are - genuine seeds of

1. *Cucurbita moschata*. Duch. DeCand.
2. — " — *villosa*. Blume. DeCand.
3. — " — *farinosa*. Blume. DeCand.
4. — " — *ceratocreas*. Mart. Reise in Bras. Don.

Allow me to make a few remarks on some of DeCandolle's species, *C. aurantiaca*, Willd. DeC. This may be W. Bartram's *C. peregrina*, found by him in the summer of 1774, growing ^{spontaneously} in the interior of East Florida (Lat. 29°) "climbing over the lofty limbs of trees; its yellow fruit, somewhat of the size & figure of a large orange, pendent from the extremities of the limbs, &c." See his Travels, London Edition 1792, p. 135. Is the aurantiaca any thing more than one of the numerous varieties of *C. ovifera*, L.? - If you will turn to Lerche's original account of *C. ovifera*, you will find that he describes two varieties of it, the pear-shaped, & the oviform. He says also that it was variegated with green & white. The variegated ones are doubtless the little variegated & two col^d. varieties that are cultivated for ornament. Lerche does not give his species as a native of Astrachan, but includes it in a list of "exotics cultivated in the gardens," where we find it enumerated with ^{such American plants as} maize, Brazilian beans, &c. The "habitat Astrachan" is therefore to be stricken out of the botanical books,

Cucurbita siceraria, Molina, DeCand. should be transferred to the genus Lagenaria.

C. umbellata, Klein, & C. multiflora Forst. DeCand. do these strictly pertain to Cucurbita?

C. asperata, Gill. Don. may be a Citrullus I think, as its Spanish name "Sandilla" seems also to indicate.

I am not at all surprised or staggered in my position that some of the Cucurbits should be found in the East Indies, growing in the vicinity of cultivated ground, as the farinosa, of which it is said habitet "ad segetes Indiae et in hortis colitur, & the villora "in hortis colitur." &c. The Commerce established by the Spanish, immediately after the discovery of the Philippine Islands, between Peru, Acapulco, & Manilla, & from the latter extending through all maritime India, would be likely to introduce many American plants, especially such as were used as articles of food on voyages. In this way probably the Sweet potato got first to Surin, where it now grows spontaneously like an indigenous plant. In the same way tobacco & maize probably made their way into India & China. Jatropha Curcas, found by early voyagers in Tropical America, seems to have been carried thence to Malabar, where it now grows in thickets, & from whence the seeds are exported. Slave vessels very early interchanged some of the plants of America & Africa. Hence we find that C. aurantia, var coccinea has been supposed a native of Sierra Leone, whence it was probably introduced from the West Indies.

Blume & DeCandolle were doubtless wrong in referring to Cucurbita farinosa the Camolenga of Rumphius. The latter seems to be identical with the Cambulam of Malabar, which is referred to the genus Benincasa.

Yours, truly,
J. W. Harris.